Covid-19 Exemptions – our response to your feedback about eligible components

In our update of 9 December 2020, we told you that Covid-19 exemptions would be available for some syllabuses and components in the March 2021 and June 2021 series. We asked you to send us your feedback about the list of eligible components that we published. Thank you for engaging with this process and sharing your feedback with us. This document is our response to the feedback we received.

Your feedback

If you asked us to consider a syllabus and component for an exemption and it is not included in this report, it may be that the component is already on the list of components eligible for a Covid-19 exemption. Please check the component list carefully.

Components added to the list

In response to your feedback about the difficulties in preparing candidates for the following components, we are making Covid-19 exemptions available for:

- Cambridge IGCSE and O Level Science subjects, Alternative to Practical components (paper 6)
- International AS and A Level Science subjects, Planning, analysis and evaluation components (Paper 5)
- Cambridge IGCSE Geography, Coursework and Alternative to coursework components (Papers 3 and 4)
- Cambridge O Level Geography, Geographical Investigations (Paper 3)

Please check the component list for full component details.

We have also added the following IGCSE Languages components to the list:

- Cambridge IGCSE Swahili – Listening (0262/02)
- Cambridge IGCSE Bahasa Indonesia – Speaking (0538/03)
- Cambridge IGCSE Urdu as a Second Language – Listening (0539/02)
- Cambridge IGCSE Hindi as a second Language – Listening (0549/02)

Components excluded from the list

Requests for components that do not meet the criteria for a Covid-19 exemption

Cambridge IGCSE History (0470/0977)

Schools asked us to consider including this under the criteria that the teaching of the syllabus requires access to facilities and equipment that has not been possible due to Covid-19 disruption. In this case, the facilities and equipment were identified as libraries and textbooks. While we recognise that students’ access to these facilities may be limited, teachers can use alternative approaches to share resources remotely which is not possible for technical equipment or laboratory and workshop settings. We have therefore not included Cambridge IGCSE History (0470/0977).
Requests asking for a reduction in content

Some schools asked us to consider reducing the content of the syllabus or to exclude certain topics. However, Covid-19 exemptions are not available for part of a component; they can only be used for entire components you are unable to prepare your candidates for. We are therefore not able to include the following syllabuses in the list of component exemptions:

- Cambridge IGCSE World Literature (0408/01)*
- Cambridge IGCSE Business studies (0450)
- Cambridge IGCSE Global Perspectives component 1 (0457/01)
- Cambridge IGCSE Economics components 1 and 2 (0455/01,02)
- Cambridge IGCSE Sociology component 2 (0495/02)
- Cambridge IGCSE Mathematics (0580 and 0980)
- Cambridge IGCSE Additional Mathematics (0606)
- International AS and A Level Business studies (9609)
- International AS and A Level Geography (9696)
- International AS and A Level Sociology (9699)
- International AS and A Level Economics (9708)
- International AS and A Level Mathematics (9709)

*We realise that teachers offering Cambridge IGCSE World Literature (0408) may be concerned about managing the oral assessment part of the coursework. We want to reassure you that this can be completed remotely as the assessment has no confidential material. We have updated our component guidance to reflect this.

How did we decide which components to include?

We considered all the feedback we received against the criteria for eligible components which we identified after we consulted with schools towards the end of 2020. The consultation showed:

- a clear majority of schools wanted Cambridge International to give students the opportunity to sit exams on the full syllabus if they can
- they wanted us to maintain robust qualifications
- schools wanted us to make sure universities recognise Cambridge qualifications
- they wanted us to limit the exemptions available
- schools recognised it was not possible to reduce the content of a syllabus by removing topics from the assessment because schools worldwide may have taught topics in a different order
- schools felt they needed greatest support in managing components that could not be effectively taught or practised because of the pandemic. This means components that require: access to a scientific lab with chemicals and equipment; access to specialist expensive equipment; use of specific software that the school has a site licence; or for students to be physically together for pair work or group projects.
- schools wanted us to take responsibility for decisions about which components would be eligible for an exemption.

We used this information to set criteria for Covid-19 exemptions, and produce a list of eligible components.
Criteria for Covid-19 exemptions

The components that are eligible for a Covid-19 exemption will meet either or both of the following criteria:

- The teaching and/or assessment of the component requires access to facilities and equipment that has not been possible due to Covid-19 disruption, e.g. instruments, laboratories, studios, audio-visual equipment, sports facilities, specific software, specialist materials.
- The teaching and/or assessment of the component requires ways of working with others, e.g. in pairs, groups or teams, which have not been possible due to Covid-19 disruption.

There is an exception to these criteria for some literature syllabuses, where the following criteria will apply:

- The teaching and/or assessment of the component assesses distinct subject content (i.e. topics, set works or themes) from the rest of the option and it has not been possible to teach this content due to Covid-19 related disruption.

Things to consider before applying for a Covid-19 exemption

Applying for a Covid-19 exemption means there is a greater risk that we might not be able to release a result for the candidates affected and we explain these risks in detail in our Covid-19 exemptions for March and June 2021 factsheet.

Exempting a candidate from part of the assessment:

- puts greater pressure on the smaller range of questions that the candidate will answer
- removes an opportunity for candidates to show what they know and can do
- means the candidate’s grade will be entirely based on their performance in a more limited range of components
- increases the risk of the candidate underperforming because they will complete a smaller percentage of the assessment
- means candidates risk having insufficient evidence for us to calculate and award an assessed mark if they are then also absent for an acceptable reason from one of the other components.

Thank you for taking the time to share your feedback with us so we can better support you and your students.